

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9579

INFO AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 7941

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CI

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT PASTRANA COMMENTS ON COLOMBIAN SCENE AND CHILE

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT PASTRANA MAKES SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE COLOMBIAN ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SCENE AND IMPLIES THAT COLOMBIA WILL SHORTLY RENEW RELATIONS WITH CHILE.

1. ON SEPT 25 I BROUGHT THE NEW AID DIRECTOR WILLIAM ELLIS TO CALL ON PRESIDENT PASTRANA. THE PRESIDENT GAVE US WELL OVER A HALF AN HOUR MOVING EASILY FROM ONE TOPIC TO ANOTHER.

2. ON THE ECONOMIC SCENE THE PRESIDENT EXPRESSED DELIGHT OVER THE PROGRESS OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR STATING HE EXPECTED A GROWTH RATE OF EIGHT PER CENT THIS YEAR AND A SUBSTANTIAL CUT IN THE UNEMPLOYMENT RATE. HE PICTURED HIS PRINCIPAL PROBLEM AS THAT OF INFLATION, WRUNG HIS HANDS OVER OUR SALE OF 16 MILLION TONS OF FEED GRAINS TO THE USSR AT A TIME WHEN THE NEEDS OF LATIN AMERICA ARE SO GREAT, AND STATED THAT COST OF SUBSIDIZING BASIC FOODSTUFFS FOR THE POPULACE WAS PROVING ASTRONOMICAL BUT HAD TO BE DONE. THE PRESIDENT EXPRESSED DISAPPOINTMENT THAT TAX COLLECTIONS HAD NOT IMPROVED BUT ASSERTED THAT HE FULLY EXPECTED THE CONGRESS TO APPROVE THE EDUCATIONAL TAX THIS YEAR.

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3. ON THE POLITICAL SIDE THE PRESIDENT SAID HE WAS CONFIDENT

THAT ANAPO HAD LOST PRESTIGE AND THAT THE COLOMBIAN REALITY ONLY PERMITTED TWO POLITICAL PARTIES. HE SAID THE ANAPO CANDIDATE, MARIA EUGENIA ROJAS DE MORENO, WAS RUNNING A PUBLIC RELATIONS CAMPAIGN AND NOT A POLITICAL CAMPAIGN, ADDING THAT MARIA EUGENIA WAS PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN THE GLORY OF BEING THE FIRST SERIOUS WOMAN CANDIDATE FOR THE PRESIDENCY IN LATIN AMERICA.

4. AT AN APPROPRIATE POINT IN THE CONVERSATION I INTRODUCED THE SUBJECT OF CHILE, MENTIONING THAT WE HAD DECIDED TO CONTINUE RELATIONS WITH THE NEW GOVERNMENT. THE PRESIDENT NODDED AND SAID THAT HE UNDERSTOOD THAT BOTH VENEZUELA AND ECUADOR HAD RECOGNIZED THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT, BUT THAT HIS MINISTER OF FOREIGN RELATIONS WAS STILL STUDYING THE MATTER. HE ADDED THAT HE EXPECTED HIS RECOMMENDATION TODAY.

5. THE PRESIDENT THEN REMINISCED ABOUT THE VISIT OF PRESIDENT SALVADOR ALLENDE TO COLOMBIA. HE CHARACTERIZED ALLENDE AS A CHARMING AND VERY HUMAN MAN, BUT NOT THE MAN TO LEAD A COUNTRY SUCCESSFULLY DOWN REVOLUTIONARY PATHS. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE CHILEAN MILITARY IS MADE UP OF INTELLIGENT, EDUCATED, MODERN MEN WHO WOULD NOT HAVE ACTED UNLESS THEY HAD FELT THEIR COUNTRY WAS IN REAL DANGER. COMMENT: IT SEEMED CLEAR TO ME THAT PRES PASTRANA WAS NOT AT ALL HAPPY WITH HIS GOVERNMENT'S DELAY IN EXTENDING RECOGNITION TO CHILE. AS REPORTED IN EMBASSY'S TELEGRAM 7591 OF SEPT 13, THE FOREIGN MINISTER MADE A RATHER STRONG STATEMENT REGRETTING THE FALL OF ALLENDE, WHICH I BELIEVE MAY NOT HAVE FOUND FAVOR WITH PRESIDENT PASTRANA. CERTAINLY IT WAS CLEAR FROM THE TENOR OF THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENTS THAT HE INTENDED TO RENEW RELATIONS WITH CHILE IN VERY SHORT ORDER.

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